

UTAH *arts* COUNCIL



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Community State Partnership Program

*The Art Of*

# Board Development

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COMMUNITY/STATE PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM

# The Art of Board Development

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## P R E F A C E

One of the main goals of the Community/State Partnership (CSP) Program is to facilitate and promote the stabilization and health of the many arts and cultural organizations throughout the state of Utah. This handbook is one of the ways we attempt to fulfill that goal. This book is a companion handbook to two others currently published by the Utah Arts Council CSP program. We have recently revised *The Art of Forming a Nonprofit*, a guide to incorporating and obtaining an IRS 501c3 designation and have published a handbook on volunteers, *The Art of Volunteer Development*. These three handbooks will soon be available on our website at [www.arts.utah.gov/CSP/](http://www.arts.utah.gov/CSP/). Feel free to peruse them there or download for use within your organization. We hope they will assist in your efforts to create healthy organizations by meeting the demands of a changing nonprofit environment.

This handbook focuses on arts and cultural organizations and some of the problems unique to these types of organizations. However, most of the material presented is equally useful for any nonprofit organization. Every nonprofit struggles with board development and leadership issues. Unfortunately, there is no cookie cutter remedy to these issues. As a nonprofit leader, you should establish an understanding of the tools available and adapt them to your organization's needs. Every nonprofit has its own evolving culture and to dictate a set rule of governing principles that would work for all cultures would be impossible. Instead, I have sifted through the latest research and literature on nonprofit boards and leadership, added to that my 18 years experience in the field of nonprofits, and given you an array of ideas and tools to consider adapting to your own unique style of leadership.

The material presented herein is not all encompassing. It is just a tool. Your own assessment of your organization and leadership style is most important. Your leadership challenge is to use some of these tools to make your assessment and develop your board to meet the needs and fulfill the vision of your organization. I wish you well on that ever-changing journey.

Anna Boulton  
Community/State Partnership  
Program Coordinator

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# INTRODUCTION

It was a typical Monday morning at the office when the phone rang. I answered with my usual greeting and heard a tentative voice on the line say, “Anna, I need your help with my board.” I sensed what was coming next. “I can’t get them to meetings anymore. They were such a dedicated group of people but now it is like the honeymoon is over. I’m burning out because only a few of us do all the work. What can I do to get them recharged?” This is not an isolated plea. I have answered many similar phone calls on a weekly basis. All these conversations ask the same question in different ways, “How can I get my board to be better?” I encourage boards to ask that question because only those that do will have the desire to find the answers and strengthen their organization.

Too often I see boards struggle to overcome the challenges of organizational change—apathetic members, obsessive founders, and egocentric, unruly board members. The organization’s mission gets lost in the morass of internal power struggles and lack of direction. The hours lost in these issues are unnecessary and often heartbreaking.

This handbook addresses some of the issues and challenges that set up roadblocks to success, as well as some of the basics to board development. Chapter headings are in the form of questions that are frequently asked by board members, executive directors and board chairs. Although it is impossible to address all the issues that emerge in the boardroom and in board development, these questions encompass a large share of them.

This handbook includes a section at the end of each chapter entitled, *Practicum*. In this section, you will find some suggested ways to apply the material discussed in the chapter from the perspective and role of a Board Member, Board Chair or Executive Director (Chief Executive). These ideas are not meant to be prescriptive but simply a starting point for further adaptation within your organization.

As you read this handbook, I hope you will feel inspired and reassured that you can make a difference in building a strong and effective board. I have a great deal of faith in the leaders of our nonprofit organizations today. You awe and inspire me with your fortitude in pursuing your dreams despite the obstacles in your way. I dedicate this handbook to you as leaders who keep dreaming, keep learning, and keep trying.





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